Research Data Management:

Guidelines for archiving physical research data

Introduction

Like digital data, substantive physical research data should be kept for a minimum of 10 years post-project, and made openly available to the public wherever possible, subject to legal and ethical requirements. See the guidance on the RDM intranet site for more information on open access to research data.

This document details how to archive physical research data with the Open University.

1. Select and appraise research data

Not all data can or should be kept for the initial ten years. Guidance on selection and appraisal of research data is available on the Research Data Management intranet site. Any data not selected for storage should be securely destroyed.

For maximum accessibility, high-value research data should be digitised and deposited in a trusted research data repository. Library Services does not offer this service and budget for the digitisation of research data should be covered by the research grant. For advice on external companies who offer digitisation services contact the Research Data Librarian.

2. Contact Records Storage

The Open University has a Records Storage service which is available free of charge for researchers to store research data (and other research records) for the University's designated retention period of 10 years. In order to access this facility, email the Records Manager.

Boxes and barcodes will be provided by the Records Storage service; details of the procedure for obtaining these and placing items into Records Storage are available on the Records Storage intranet page.

3. Ensure your data is properly documented

Research data are only as useful as the documentation which accompanies them. In order to facilitate re-use (both by yourself and by other researchers), you must ensure that data is properly labelled and indexed.

In addition to completing the transfer sheet template provided by the Records Storage service, you should ensure that each box you transfer to Records Storage contains at the minimum a data list or index file detailing all the files or documents included within the box. A template and example is available on the UK Data Archive website.

A document detailing the provenance of your data is especially useful for future users; this should be added as a readme.txt file to the data catalogue on ORO (see Section 4 below). There may be best practice for documenting research data in your discipline; if this is not the case guidance on what this readme file should contain is available on the [Research Data Management Intranet site](#).

Bear in mind that your research records may contain personal data, e.g. consent forms, which will assist with re-use of you data. However, this personal data should only be made available to members of staff who need to use it.

4. Create a catalogue record in ORO

Creating a metadata record in ORO will enable discovery and access to your research data, in accordance with OU and funder policies.

If your data cannot be made publicly available, you must still create a record in ORO describing any data stored in Records Storage for administrative purposes.

For information on how to record research data in ORO see the [guidance on the RDM intranet site](#).

Note: in the field "location" on the ORO record, enter "OU Records Storage"

5. Once the retention period has lapsed, review

At the end of the initial retention period, the data stored must be reviewed to determine whether it should be securely destroyed or remain in storage (and for how long). See "research conduct and project management" in the [Research section](#) of the University retention schedule.

If the depositor is no longer based at the University, responsibility for reviewing the data will lie with the Faculty Associate Dean for Research (ADR), or other named contact assigned by the depositor. Alternatively, to simplify this process an initial review decision may be made, if you are able to do this please note this on the Records storage service transfer sheet.

Any data which are determined to be high value and should be kept indefinitely following this review process will be transferred to the University Archive. There is a cost involved in depositing material in the Archive and all deposits must be approved by the Faculty Dean. For more information contact the [University Archivist](#).

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